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SERMON DCLVIII.

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DEPENDENCE ON GOD.

"Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name."—1 CHRON. xxix. 11—13.

"Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it."—Ps. cxlvii. 1.

In these passages, God's strength and supremacy on the one hand are asserted, or implied, and on the other, the creature's dependence upon him. It is exceedingly important that the creature realize this his dependence upon God for every thing, especially for prosperity and success in all religious endeavors for himself or for others. There are, indeed, two extremes to be avoided. On the one side, that which supersedes the employment of human instrumentality. On the other, that which attributes to such instrumentality an inherent and adequate efficiency. To proceed on either of these grounds, must be followed by disappointment. We have the true doctrine and medium indicated everywhere in the Scriptures. The creature, the human agent, must plant and water. God must give the increase. There will be no divine blessing unless there is some human effort, fidelity, culture to bless—and no blessing from above will follow the endeavor of the creature unless he make the endeavor, feeling and acknowledging that God alone can give it vitality and efficiency.

"Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it." It is trying, working, expecting, in the spirit of dependence, that brings the power and brings, at length, the blessed consummation.

Respecting this doctrine of dependence, it is safe to state these two propositions:

First, That it is a true doctrine.

Secondly, That it is a practically efficacious doctrine.

I. Upon the *truth of the sentiment*, that we are dependent upon God for all things in all our plans and labors to promote the cause of piety, in any sphere, larger or smaller, it would seem, little need be said. If we admit the perfection of the Being and the Rule of God, then it plainly follows that we are thus dependent—can do nothing separate from him—nothing without him. Life, existence, health, strength are God's gift. In the admirable and opulent words quoted in the text, "Both riches and honor come of thee; and thou reignest over all; in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." We perceive—we acknowledge the dependence in every physical endeavor. But it holds with a far greater strength and absoluteness in spiritual things. Take, for instance, the great missionary enterprise, and we see at once how that in every stage and step, God's people are dependent upon him. Unless his hand and influence go with their labor, nothing is done. God alone can furnish them means. He must create the wealth, and by his providence put it in the right place; then by his Spirit create the disposition which will throw it forth where it is needed. He must also raise up the men to go out—give them the requisite qualities of mind and heart—put within them, sometimes, the spirit which shall be as the breath and fire of his own holiness; then he must prepare and open fields for them—give them access and favor where they go; then, further, he must open the minds and hearts of the people to the messages they carry and make the truth they preach the power of God to salvation. There are a great many steps from the incipency to the consummation, not one to be taken but by the presence and favor of God. Not one can be wanting without bringing defeat upon the whole undertaking. What is true of this, is equally true of religious undertakings of a more limited character. The ability to do—the efficacy of what is done, come alike and only from God. All favoring disposition—all the effects of truth, all the results of means, all the achievements of labor, are of God. This is sound philosophy, with which all reason concurs—incontrovertible fact which all experience confirms—the utterance of inspiration wherever the Bible speaks on the subject. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Though this truth is so obvious, being written on almost

every page of the Divine Word, written in all the history of the past, written in all our successes and defeats, yet we are dull in learning it. The head may admit it, but the heart is slow to rest upon it. And why should it be so, when the doctrine is so clearly true, so practically efficacious, so intimately linked with ultimate and large accomplishment?

II. We pass now to consider the *practical bearings of the sentiment.*

1. It being true that we are thus dependent upon God for the efficacy of our labors, it is altogether suitable that we feel and act upon this as a preparation—a basis of effort. Because, when a person feels so, he feels right; and when he feels right, he necessarily feels better and stronger than he does when he feels wrong. The feeling in question is a wholesome feeling. In it the individual not only satisfies his own conscience and sense of propriety, it is a position and feeling peculiarly acceptable in the sight of God. Wherever we take our proper place, he looks propitiously upon us, and upon our endeavors in his service.

2. Another thing is: This sentiment and attitude of dependence leads to effort; not to indolence, as many suppose, but to earnest endeavor; and this is the very nature of the thing, it being not the dependence of inaction, but of labor, toil, sacrifice, upon a higher power,—first doing something, and then looking for God to bless that something, giving to it vitality and achievement.

But still further; and here I make an important point—namely:

3. That this sense of dependence—the right sort, such as the Spirit begets, leads to effort of the right sort; and the right sort is the divinely prescribed sort. A genuine dependence upon God, in labors put forth for the advancement of his cause, leads those who possess it to the use of those means which God has appointed for this end. Feeling that we must have his blessing, it is natural to conclude that we can have it only by walking in his way. If he is to do the building while we do the labor, then our design must be shaped according to his pattern, and our labor be with the instrument and the material he has put into our hands.

The means God has appointed, comprehensively stated, is the gospel of his Son. The church is God's medium of power;—the people of God, his agents;—the truth of God their instrument of power. The church of God—those who have experienced in their own renovation the truth of God, in humble dependence upon divine grace, are to maintain and employ this truth and rely upon it as the great weapon of conquest. The truths of the Gospel—truths which affirm man's moral ruin, and bring forward a glorious Saviour, and a precious atonement, made by his death; and

a new creating spirit, the purchase of that death ; and urge the necessity of a great change, the heart's renovation, and of a godly life, as the fruit of this change—these great truths and others like them, christians, individually or associated, are to receive and maintain. They are to hold them as all-important, as the ground-work of every thing in the spiritual growth and structure. They are to profess them as though they were not ashamed of them, especially at a time when such efforts are made to suppress distinctive gospel truth, and the tendency is to look upon the doctrines of christianity as useless dogmas—the cry being that the belief is nothing, only let the life be right ; which is the same as to say, the sun is nothing, only let us have light and heat—the atmosphere is nothing, only let us have something to breathe. At such a time, and at all times, we say, let those who would build up the cause of God, clearly and unambiguously profess the great doctrines. Let them not only believe them with the heart and profess them with the mouth, let them also live them in the life—reproduce them in the character, in the spirit, and the actions. But for this—the right living, certainly with a life contradictory of the doctrine, a life dishonoring the truth, the doctrine will be crippled—the truth crushed and nullified at the threshold of the temple. The christian's life, as helping or hindering the truth, is an essential and immutable consideration.

Again, the friends and supporters of these truths must cause them to be preached. While the truth is the means, preaching is God's appointment. It has pleased him "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Preaching under God is to lay the foundation of the spiritual edifice, and fetch along the timbers, and hew them and fit them for their place. And in order to do this, it must be not the preaching of man's theories or schemes, but the great verities of God's revealing ; very commonly unrelished in the world, because not fitted to the carnal or the fanciful tastes of the world ; but soul-rousing and life-giving when they find access to the soul's secret chamber, and the life and power fall upon the soul's quick susceptibilities. Only let it be the doctrine of God—God will take care of it. Let it be clearly stated, conclusively reasoned, and faithfully applied, and it will do something, even an honorable and an endless work. This is God's way of building up his kingdom, and like his way to heaven it is the only way. It is for his people to take the great principles and provisions of his gospel, profess them, maintain them, and cause them to be proclaimed, doing it themselves, each one in his appropriate sphere ; doing it in a more formal and conspicuous way, through the ministry of reconciliation. The point and the argument of this head is, that the proper feeling of dependence upon God will lead to the taking of this course ; will induce indeed the greatest carefulness not to depart in the least from the way of working which God marks out ; to keep ever clear

of the dreamy and shifting notions of man ; to abide ever upon the eternal rock of God's doctrine and scheme, and herein we see clearly the value and the efficacy of this law of dependence.

4. The vital and efficacious bearing of the sentiment in question, appears further in this : that it leads those who cherish it directly to the fountain of all strength and success. Feeling weak, insufficient in themselves, most naturally will they repair to him who has strength, to whom nothing is too hard, and who is ever ready to help.

Though they use the means God has directed,—present the truth he has given—they know well enough that it will accomplish nothing without his blessing. His own mighty power must go with it, before there will be any adequate power in it. Preachers may preach as Stephen did, till they are stoned for their pain-giving faithfulness ; the stones themselves may rise up in the place of the slain and preach with a like faithfulness ; the dead may come forth from their graves, and the spirits join them from the invisible scene, and preach with the eloquence of heaven, and the impassioned energy of despair, and the best of it and all of it will accomplish nothing in the conversion and redemption of men :—this is their conviction, robust and profound within them, it is what they know. And what is the effect of it ? Not to let down the importance of truth, or of preaching,—of any labor, argument, or eloquence to extend it, and give it power ;—but this, the effect is to bring them to the throne of God in prayer, knowing that they themselves cannot do it—knowing that God can, and that he waits to be inquired of. They come to his throne ; and if they come humbly and in faith, they do not come in vain. They get help. They draw down power—a power that is felt in the mighty touch and sweep of it. And there is progress—something is done that will abide accomplished, and be revealed in glory ; and all because of this spirit of dependence which brought them straight and earnest to that fountain of power with a heart and a faith to open its treasured resources and energies upon the world.

5. The practical efficacy of the sentiment appears further in this—that it is a greatly invigorating sentiment. It not only leads to effort, and to effort of the right sort—using the right means ; and leads also the soul to God for a blessing upon the means, its tendency is to foster vigorous and sustained effort—labor. It puts into the people a mind to work, and work with wholeness and heartiness. And how does it do this ? I answer, by putting within them, the spirit of hope—the assured belief that their labor will not be in vain in the Lord. It is God—his means they are to use—his efficiency they are to seek and wield—his cause they are to promote. Laboring now with such dependence, environed as they know themselves to be, with such powers, may they not labor in hope ? Were it themselves only ; were the enterprise

based upon a boasted self-reliance; were they to enter upon the warfare in their own name, and at their own charges, there might be, there inevitably would be, doubts and distrust, sufficient to dampen the energy, and extinguish all disposition to try. Such is the very nature of distrust and despondency. It weighs down the soul in the chilling glooms of inaction; while the opposite is the effect of the hope which this spirit of dependence, and consequently of trust, begets. It is to lift up and cheer the heart, and brighten the countenance, and nerve the soul for instant and manly endeavor; because we are sure of the end. Other labors may fail, these will not fail. Other enterprises may come short, this of redemption will attain its consummation. We are sure, because we have put ourselves upon the foundation God has laid; have linked our toil and our prayer fast to his blessed promise; and joined our heart to the infinite heart of his Son; and made our interest one with the great kingdom of his grace. Whenever we can do this, as individuals, or as churches, we are ready for anything—for peace or conflict—for life or death—ready to launch out into the deep, to go any where that Christ will go with us—to enter upon any work which Christ bids us do, because we have confidence in him—because when we feel weak then are we strong. Such is the invigorating tendency of this doctrine of a felt dependence.

There is not only an invigorating, but also a persistent efficacy in the sentiment. It induces the mind to hold on; when nothing seems to be done for a long time; when no progress is apparent from the labor and the sacrifices, so long and so abundantly bestowed, this feeling of dependence urges to perpetuity of labor. The argument is very short and simple. The efficiency being of God, it will be revealed in his own good time; assuredly at some time, it will appear; his own crowning blessing will come. The depending and waiting Christian knows, that if he falls back, he forfeits everything; loses all the toil, expense, and heart's treasure thus far bestowed. If he take off his hand, one single hour, before God's time comes, he foregoes the whole; but if he keep on his hand, and keep firm and true his heart, the very crisis of his discouragement may be the harbinger of the king's approach, and the day of his own triumph. There may be great opposition, formidable powers arrayed against, barriers seemingly insurmountable towering in the path. Shall he for these falter and give over? It is a *brief* process, I say again. With his cherished doctrine of dependence for his premises, he springs boldly to the conclusion. Against all, God helping, he holds on and goes forward; and the lions flee, and the obstacles sink, and he comes victorious to the end and consummation of his hopes.

We see all through, how in the things of God, this doctrine of dependence, stands associated with ultimate success. Whatever Christian, or body of Christians will labor with this feeling—this doctrine embalmed in the heart, with the strength and steadiness

it inspires, employing the means and only those which it dictates and sanctions—the great principles of the gospel, professed and lived, and loved, and preached, and the promised Spirit sought in earnest prayer; whoever in this tone and frame, will thus labor, and hold on against all signs and all weathers, will accomplish much in the end for human welfare—much for the regeneration of society, and the saving of the souls of men. All other plans, and schemes, and theories abroad, are only experiments; mere mushroom-growths, the offspring of human pride and restlessness. But this other process, I have sketched, a chain at once of adamant strength, and of shining links of love—constructed from the golden treasures of the gospel, reaching back and making fast to the throne of God himself, and extending forward till it shall compass at length a world within the pale of a willing and joyous allegiance—this has stood the test and strife of ages, and has come out brighter and stronger from all the fires it has gone through. Many will scorn this way. Still they are blessed by it, if ever blessed at all. The true reformations are where God's word and signal working are. The decency, the morality, the piety are here—the foundation-stones, and the supporting pillars of the great edifice of society are here. All else but hay and wood and stubble. Our strength and valid expectation come only in a fixed trusting here—will be realized fully, gloriously, in a child-like leaning upon our God.

Let me in closing just indicate three or four remarks suggested by this subject.

1. This doctrine or sentiment of dependence shuts the door against most of the excuses made for withholding Christian endeavor. The greatest excuse of all, the one most frequently bubbling out, is this:—"I am such a poor weak creature, it is of no use to attempt any thing." This sentiment broods in many a heart, like a smothering ash bed, upon all the coals of Christian zeal; and is ever coming from the lips to chill and throw back other timid and adventuring hearts. "O, we are such little feeble ones; moats in God's immensity; 'tis of no use." I say, it is all wrong. You can do it *perhaps*—certainly you can try. And it matters little whether you try, or Gabriel tries; for neither you nor Gabriel can do it without God. And God can do it, and will as soon do it, through you, as through Gabriel. Before our blessed doctrine of an ever present and ever working God, always ready to do through our humble endeavor, human littleness and feebleness has nothing to say, but only to go forward, believe and be strong in the Lord.

2. Our subject authorizes any measure of Christian expectation. I only name this. You see, at once, what a scale and scene of wonder it opens to the vision of your faith.

3. This feeling of dependence, is an admirable beauty in the character. The creature in his place giving God the throne;

God shining from his throne, and the creature dwelling beneath, in the flooding radiance of his beneficence; it is fitting—it is beautiful.

4. It is always a blessed feeling in the soul—something that makes the soul quiet and happy; to refer all might and efficacy to God; all our achievement and prosperity to him; to feel the gushing thankfulness; to render praise for his bounties; to thank and praise him still, there is nothing this side heaven more like the essence and fulness of heaven's joy.

Finally. It is a feeling which will bring every person, truly and deeply cherishing it, within the circle and pale of God's eternal blessedness—the humility, the lowliness, the breaking down and the sinking of self, beneath the burden of your sins, these will bring you where Christ hung and bled; and standing there, and beholding that wondrous sight, with such a heart, taught its sins—your burden will fall. And the moment you bow in faith, your soul shall come and dwell in the favored circle of the redeemed and rejoicing in the kingdom of our God.

SERMON DCLIX.

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THE DAYS OF OLD.*

“Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.”—DEUT. xxxii. 7.

MOSES, the Leader and Prophet of Israel, was one of the most remarkable personages whose names have come down to us in history. He occupied a station of the highest responsibility ever entrusted to man; and he discharged all its obligations with the utmost fidelity. He elevated a race of bondmen into the dignity of a nation. He restored to them liberty, religion and law. His success as a Leader was not more remarkable than his wisdom as a Legislator and Teacher. And we admire his true greatness of soul when he ascribes all his successes to the direct interposition or the overruling Providence of God. His plans were accomplished because the Almighty was his guide. In every word he uttered, in every movement he made, he acknowledged himself

*A Discourse occasioned by the death of JEREMIAH KEELER, a soldier of the Revolution, delivered in the Presbyterian Church of South Salem, Westchester County, N. Y., Feb. 27, 1853.

to be the agent of the Most High, whose will respecting the descendants of Abraham he was commissioned to execute.

Having brought the numerous band of emigrants to the close of their long pilgrimage, he cites them to a grand review. The chief is about to resign his commission; for he and they must part before they cross the boundary of the promised land. His warfare is ended; he has fought his last battle; he will soon be at rest forever. At this point he addressed a farewell message to his countrymen, in the celebrated song, composed by divine command, of which the text forms a portion. He rehearsed the dealings, promises and threatenings of God respecting the Hebrews. He exhorts them to obedience by a review of God's mercies; and in this connection occur the words of the text: "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee."

He sends them for instruction to the past, while their gaze is intently fixed on the immediate future. The brilliant prospects opening before them might cause them to forget the lessons which their long abode in the desert should convey. The words of admonition were therefore timely and important. In all their career, they had never more needed the counsels of wisdom, and the guidance of God, than when they were about to enter upon their long expected possessions. The occasion demanded a careful review of the principles which they had adopted, and a reverent compliance with the will of that beneficent Being, who had chosen them for His peculiar people from among all the nations of the earth. By such a retrospect, they would discover the hand of God in the disposal of every event; and be able to trace, amidst the agitated and conflicting affairs of time, the steady current of an all-wise Providence in "the days of old," and throughout "the years of many generations." Their fathers could show them this unvarying course in the government of God: their elders could tell them of His revealed plans, His promises, and His faithfulness.

Occasions frequently arise, not only in the progress of nations, but also in the life of individuals, which justify the wisdom of retrospection. And we are naturally led to "remember the days of old," by the particular occasion which we have this morning assembled to honor with our mournful respect for the dead. It invites us to examine what our fathers have shown us, and listen to what our elders can tell us. We look with filial respect upon the man whose head is silvered by the ninety-third winter of his life. He is the remnant of an age gone by. The span of his existence sweeps the circle of a century. He stands by the wayside of passing generations an oracle to be consulted, a monument to be revered. His is a voice from the heroic age of our country, relating from memory the narrative of events which

have long been the themes of history. No descendant of the revolutionary fathers can remain unmoved in the presence of one of their compatriots in arms, whose protracted life, embracing the manhood of three generations, brings vividly to view his compeers long since departed. The heart glows with gratitude to God when we read the record of those times of battle and of victory for the unalienable rights of man: but the sight of a relic of the old Continental Line that pressed onward through reverses, destitution and self-sacrifice, up to final triumph and independence, stirs the heart with unwonted emotion, for it is the glorious past speaking eloquently to *the present*, not in the page of history, but with the living voice. It leads us to "remember the days of old," when the American colonists resisted the invasion of their natural and chartered rights: when the question was, whether they should remain subjects of the British constitution, or become vassals of the British throne.

It would ill become this day or this place to consider principally the secular issues which were involved in the momentous struggle that followed. We shall find an appropriate theme in the RELIGIOUS INTERESTS which were at stake. The claims set up and the pretensions made by many who have since come in for a share of freedom's blessings, require that our countrymen should be reminded that the war for independence was not exclusively a contest for civil liberty. The dear-bought rights of conscience were remotely jeopardized, and more directly the principle of religious liberty. The belief is well-founded, that if the Colonies had been subdued, the Church Establishment of England would have been declared by law the established church of all the Colonies, as it had been already in many of them. The confiscation of church property belonging to those who were called Dissenters, to the use of the established church, had already been perpetrated in some instances by the king's officials; and the power of a proud conqueror, supported by a mercenary Parliament, would not have scrupled at any pretext to accomplish an object, cherished by the temporal and spiritual aristocracy of the mother country. "No bishop, no king," a maxim first expressed by a sovereign of England, was a favorite saying of the nobility. And if the principle of "taxation without representation" had triumphed in the defeat of the colonists, this country would no doubt have been covered with lords spiritual as well as lords temporal, church lands as well as crown lands, church and crown united, and that monstrous system of ecclesiastical robbery called tithes, by which a man is compelled to pay for the support of a sect which he disapproves. A rich and worldly State church lording it over God's heritage, would have driven the colonists back into the wilderness again, to be enslaved as soon as their advancing prosperity should tempt the rapacious cupidity of kingly power.

This result was justly feared by many of the colonists whose fathers had escaped, or who had themselves fled from religious oppression in the old world ; and they were like the elders of the children of Issachar, "men having understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." Among them were descendants of the Huguenots of France, who "remembered the days of old," when their ancestors were tormented with savage barbarity, or tortured to death, because they would not give up their Bible and their God ; and who did not forget that night of old—that night of unequalled horrors—which followed the eve of St. Bartholomew's. Among them were representatives of the brave Hollanders, who asserted their independence and maintained their Protestant Christianity against the most formidable popish powers of Europe. Among them were children of the Scottish covenanters, who met to worship God in desolate retreats—who hid in dens and caves of the earth to escape outrages and death at the hands of a brutal soldiery, obeying a more brutal king. Among them were descendants of Cromwell's warriors, to whom Englishmen are at this day indebted for some of their most valued privileges, and who had victoriously fought in defence of the Reformation on the plains of Europe, and had thus learned to oppose tyranny by force. With one threatening word, their master, stopt the bloody persecution of the Waldenses ; and thenceforth, during the life of Cromwell, persecution was at an end. Among them pre-eminently were the honored Puritans of England, who feared God rather than king or prelate, and were therefore exiled from their country, and compelled to carve a home out of the wild forests of America.

All these classes had been sufferers for conscience' sake under the power of despotic kings, although in some of these cases the royal authority was obedient to an ecclesiastical power that claimed to be superior to all the monarchs of the earth. Hence these classes of colonists were suspicious of every encroachment of the crown on their chartered rights, as jeopardizing or invading their religious privileges. To the effect of this conviction, the success of the American Revolution is directly traceable. While many engaged in the contest mainly for the defence of civil rights, many were moved to the same measure to maintain the supremacy of a free Gospel in connection with civil liberty. And hence, on the main issue, a general harmony of counsels and of effort prevailed throughout the Colonies.

But it was the Puritan spirit which reigned over all that mighty contest. It has been well said that God sifted the kingdoms for wheat wherewith to sow the virgin soil of America. And the same God suffered not the old monarchies to reap the precious harvest. The Puritan spirit was transplanted into the new world, and here found an ample field, a fertile soil, and a vigorous growth. The Spirit of the Lord was in it, and "where the Spirit

of the Lord is, there is liberty." Its birth-place was Geneva. It was cradled in France, and rocked in the storm of persecution. It was nurtured among the rugged glens of Scotland. It grew to man's estate under the heavy hand of oppression in England. The dungeon could not confine it. The faggot and the sword could not destroy it. And from this baptism of blood it crossed the ocean, and trod the free shores of the new world with the activity of a strong man armed.

Its foundation principle was, the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Its leading doctrine was, justification by faith in the atoning merits of Christ alone, resting on the covenant of an unchanging God. Its ministry was of equal authority, to be called of God and not of man, and to show by their doctrine and their deeds whether they were in the line of succession from the Apostles. Its ordinances were Scriptural, carefully excluding every ceremony which was not enjoined by the Word of God. It yielded nothing to mere human authority: it subjected every thing to the divine command. It declared by the mouth of one of its disciples, "In matters of the Church, there may be nothing done but by the Word of God." And again, "It is not enough that the Scripture speaketh not against them, unless it speak for them." As the Scriptures hold every soul accountable to God, hence the right and duty of every soul to possess and study the Word of God; and hence also the right, not of private interpretation, but of private judgment on what the Will of God ordains. Any denial of these doctrines, and any abridgement of these rights the Puritans considered an infringement of the authority of Christ, the Supreme Head of his Church, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords.

In this general statement, we discover the foundation of human rights, the natural equality of man, the seeds of just and equal laws, the true end and aim of all civil government. For the mind once emancipated from spiritual despotism, pants for civil liberty, through which alone religious freedom can be fully enjoyed. And the man who traces all human authority to Christ, and acknowledges none which does not descend from Him, will not easily yield to despotic power, whether it be exerted in Church or in State, by priest or king.

These views were held, almost without exception, by the great Reformers of the sixteenth century; they were eminently advocated by the leading spirits at Geneva: and hence the Reformation not only brought back a hidden Bible and a buried Gospel, but it also gave birth to modern liberty. This system of doctrines obtained its full practical development in the American colonies. It prevailed throughout the country. And this fact is sufficient to account for the union of the colonies in the war of independence. And in this view of the case, we are not surprised to learn that ministers of the Gospel preached the duty of forcible

opposition. In their minds, "resistance to tyrants was obedience to God." Large numbers of their people were accordingly found in the patriot assemblies and armies; and when the decisive struggle had begun, they themselves did not hesitate to exchange the sanctuary for the camp, in order to preserve among the troops, by their preaching and their example, the spirit of piety and the love of liberty. They exerted a widespread and salutary influence, which was well understood and acknowledged at the time; and their services should never be forgotten. Their voice was also heard in the halls of legislation; and while Timothy Dwight, afterwards the honored President of Yale College, was a chaplain in the army on the Hudson, John Witherspoon, the President of the College of New Jersey, was a member of the Continental Congress, and affixed his signature to the immortal Declaration of Independence. And the forerunner and model of that Declaration, be it known, was the production of the old Puritan spirit, which always vindicated the rights of man. It was drafted and adopted by a convention composed mainly of refugees from religious oppression in the old world, assembled at Mechlenburg in North Carolina, in the month of April, 1776, a few months prior to the adoption by Congress of the great Declaration, in many respects identical with it. The mind is struck with the grandeur of the subject when we read the beginning of that document—"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness"—and when we remember that praying men, God-fearing men, first gave these glorious truths to the world.

When the Virginia House of Burgesses adopted resolutions of forcible resistance, next to the eloquent Patrick Henry, who was the principal instigator of that step, stood Mr. Muhlenburgh, a Lutheran Minister, who afterwards led his parishioners to the war.

The descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers had so long enjoyed comparative freedom in civil and religious affairs, that they could not quietly submit to the tyranny of either king, parliament, or priesthood; and hence the spirit of opposition in New England was universal.

Without mentioning many other instances equally deserving of notice, the foregoing will serve to illustrate the fact that Christian men and Christian ministers endangered their fortunes and their lives in that decisive conflict: and this fact finds the principal explanation in their adherence to those sacred principles which we have already mentioned. Confiding in the protection of Heaven, they committed themselves to Him that judgeth righteously; and the result justified their faith and rewarded their highest expectations. Without the cordial co-operation of these praying men, it cannot be supposed that the colonies could have been successful;

nor is it probable that forcible resistance would have been resolved on, if they had opposed it. While they withheld nothing which men highly prize, they supplied the only element of final success, and that was, an operative faith in God. With His Word for their guide, and the history of Christ's Kingdom in the earth before them, they pressed resolutely forward through the most painful vicissitudes till peace came and perched on the banner of victory to reward their incredible hardships, and make them the benefactors of coming ages.

The importance of the principles involved in the struggle they could weigh in the balances of the sanctuary. They could distinguish the transitory from the permanent. Obedient only to the will of Him who says, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man in whom there is no help," they watched the "signs of the times," they compared them with past events, they applied the tests of Scripture and of Providence; and in this concentrated light their opinions were formed, and their measures adopted. They gained a correct "understanding of the times," by watching the thickening events as they arose through the heat of discussion and the smoke of conflict; and in that serene upper air they viewed them in their true relations and tendencies. Beneath, was the will of God underlying all the eras of time: above, was the Providence of God, regulating all the affairs of time: in the midst, were panting mortals, struggling in peace or war, never at rest, while the Spirit of God moved among them to accomplish through human agency his sovereign will; and they who submitted to his guidance were shielded by his providence till their work was done. With such a religious belief, they looked for the finger of God, and they saw it. It pointed along a pathway of poverty and suffering, conflict and death, to the glorious and expanding prospect of a mighty nation of self-governed free men, such as the world had never seen, endowed with the means of securing every temporal and spiritual good. They might not survive to enjoy it. They might perish by the way, fainting and alone, yet not alone, for God would be there. They might fall in the murderous shock of armies. But that divine finger and that sublime prospect;—ah, perish every thought of inglorious ease, every suggestion of self-seeking expediency, that the will of God in man's redemption may be done! It was the practical operation of faith! And that man is blind who does not see in these governing principles an element of resolute exertion which makes men brave danger, disaster, and martyrdom, in the defence and maintenance of eternal right! It was this element which operated more or less on all classes engaged in the struggle for independence. A few venture to call it faith in the justice of the cause: they look too low; for without an overruling God justice would be exiled from the earth. Some call it faith in the progress of man toward perfection: they look too high, and

are lost in fleecy clouds. But the widespread influence of faith in the God of justice who has provided for human progress toward perfectibility in the plan of man's salvation, united all in a fraternity of common interests and a common destiny. It sent them to the tented field, each man a hero, defying poverty, starvation and death, that they might bequeath a freeman's birth-right to millions yet unborn.

Who does not see the guiding hand of God in this momentous struggle for the rights of man? Examine similar contests in modern times, and they have been either defeated, or if successful have produced no beneficial results, in consequence of the absence of these controlling principles. It will always be so while time endures. Nations must be prepared for self-government by the teachings of God's Word, in order to qualify them for the lawful use of freedom. They only are qualified for liberty who acknowledge the supremacy of a just and liberal constitution and its executors; who respect the rights of others as they regard their own; who are obedient to the laws through the force of moral obligation, and not through fear of an inquisitorial police or a standing army; and who are willing to yield private preferences to the public good. He whose character answers to this description deserves the honored epithet of a *self-governed* man. And he is fitted for a useful and benevolent citizenship who has learned these lessons of political wisdom; for in them are comprehended the truth that is necessary for him to know on the point of a citizen's duty.

The end of all government is to secure to every loyal citizen the peaceable enjoyment of his rights. But what are *human rights*? No written constitution—no statute law, can create them. They can be declared and ratified by constitutions; they can be defined and guarded by enacted laws. But, as they are no man's gift, so they are no nation's gift. The Rights of Man are his inalienable privileges under the government of God. And the powers of human government "are ordained of God" for the purpose of securing those rights to every man. But private rights must necessarily be limited by contact with the rights of others. Hence the individuals who compose a free State must agree to yield private rights so far as public justice and the public welfare demand, and to sustain and defend each other in the enjoyment of private rights within the limits circumscribed by the general good. This constitutes a just, equal, and well regulated freedom; and to secure this to every citizen is the end of all good government.

How can this great end be attained? Not by standing armies, not by frowning fortresses, not by a secret police. There are many moral considerations involved, and the only lasting and successful government must therefore to a great extent be moral.

No man can invent his own rights—no State can create them: they are the gift of our Maker; and therefore we must learn of Him their nature and extent, and to Him we are in the highest sense responsible for the use of them. Hence, a knowledge of these rights, and of their limitations, is of vital moment in a free government, because where power does not overawe, self-restraint should govern. The Author of Human Rights is the best teacher of them; and His infallible instructions are contained in the Sacred Scriptures. They alone can prepare the nations for self-government; and thus were the English Colonies in America prepared. The proof is every where throughout all the contest and in its results. There was the Gospel preached and loved among those warlike bands. There was prayer in the Congress, and there was prayer in those armies, from the commander-in-chief to the common soldiery, who honored religion by supplicating the interposition of the Unseen Hand that rules the destinies of nations. And when reverses fell upon our arms, and fear was spreading like a contagion through the country, *Proclaim a fast!* was the voice of Congress; and the proclamation went abroad, and the army and the people prostrated themselves before the Majesty of Heaven, acknowledging their unworthiness, but pleading their dependence, and imploring his help—a sublime act of allegiance to the God of nations and of men.

Time would fail me to show the numerous proofs of the widespread religious feeling which was manifested, not only by individuals, but also by legislative bodies, all tending to show that the great God our Saviour was the ultimate dependence and resort of the revolutionary fathers. But I ask you to look at this from another point of view. Consider their union in adversity. It is not difficult to find reasons for their union when success attended their marches; but what held the patriot armies together, when the cause seemed utterly hopeless, when the continental treasury was bankrupt, when the brave soldiers barefooted tracked their way in blood upon the frozen snow, when starvation put out the mess-fires, and nakedness put beggary to the blush? Patriotism will go great lengths to stem the torrent of reverses: but no love of country without a stronger motive could stand against such unexampled deprivations. Ah, the power of God, who is the "strength of the needy," withstood the otherwise inevitable result of such calamities. In distant homes there were many trembling but trustful hearts who had given their kindred to the war. They had power with God, for they had learned to pray; and daily petitions on behalf of those intrepid, self-sacrificing men were offered by pious souls who had nothing more to give, unto Him who "doeth according to his will in the army of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth."

1. Viewed in the least unfavorable light, war is a deplorable expedient for settling difficulties. Its evils are always terrible.

It is the last argument of kings; but it sometimes works their own destruction. The patriot fathers were men of peace. But they had fled to this continent to escape religious oppression; and they felt that if their asylum for civil and religious liberty were destroyed, there was no land to which they might escape, and found another empire for God. Therefore they sought for years to avert the blow by deputations, petitions, and remonstrances; and when these and every peaceful expedient were fruitless, they prepared for war. It were better for them to die freemen than to live slaves.

2. We are prone to consider too exclusively the civil aspects of the revolutionary struggle. Our histories, narrating the obvious and striking events of those times, do not lucidly and philosophically display the religious features of that era; and in some of them, religion is allowed to have very little to do with it. We protest against this as unfaithful to truth, unjust to posterity. The materials of a *complete* history, civil and religious, are yet sufficiently ample; and whoever judiciously executes this work will supply an important vacancy in our national annals, and deserve the honors of his country. Such a work, among other things, will show, first, That the religious element occupied a place in the causes of the Revolution much more important than is assigned to it in the current histories of that event. Secondly, That the Bible is the charter of our liberties. It taught our fathers the true doctrine of human rights, and hence its principles of morality and benevolence enter into the foundation of our institutions and the spirit of our laws.

The consequence of overlooking these important truths is seen, on the one hand, in a disposition manifested in some quarters to yield to the audacious demands of foreign religionists, who claim privileges which are wisely withheld from any denomination, in order to preserve the equal rights of all; and on the other, of infidels and scoffers, mostly from foreign lands, who claim the privilege of abusing our liberties and trampling on our most cherished religious rights. To yield to the demands of either, will be the entering wedge of destruction. The ancient republics were destroyed by the corruption of the people. The low state of public morals in our land is shown by the increase of crime, the evasion of pecuniary obligation, the profligacy of political parties, and the disregard of religious ordinances. The only barrier to these polluting streams, swollen by foreign currents, is that which our fathers erected in "the days of old." It was a pure faith established on the Word of God. They found it firm enough to bear them through every change, disaster, and struggle; and they bequeathed to their descendants, together with its rewards, the benefit of their example. To follow human guides in this day of light is egregious folly; and he is a conceited fool who pretends to be wise above what is written in the

Sacred Scriptures. The lively oracles of God are the only guides to national prosperity, the only safe-guards of public honor and fidelity, the only trustees of permanent and future welfare. Though they are in their nature unchangeable, yet they are endowed with a living power which stimulates human exertion, and therefore favors change in the right direction, and with a flexibility which adapts them to the basis of every stage of human advancement. Hence they are the only true principles of stability and progress, which are the twin-angels of reform. The one retains all that is good, while the other reaches forward after better things for man. Happy is that nation whose institutions are founded on this rock of eternal righteousness: "happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

3. We should strive to retain and perpetuate the influence of that honest, patriotic and religious spirit which prevailed in our country in "the days of old." This Republic has come to be too powerful to fear the armies of foreign nations. Its most formidable foes will arise within its own bosom. If our liberties are to be destroyed, at this day, they will be lost through the suicidal act of profligate and misguided citizens, led on by the specious cry of "Reform or Philanthropy," under whose banners much mischief has already been perpetrated. If, in this land of ours, industry is well rewarded and property is secure; if education is highly valued, and knowledge abounds; if morals are elevated, religion honored and homes happy; if all men are free to do that which is lawful and right, we should not forget that these blessings are directly traceable to the liberal patriotism and piety of those, who laid the foundations of our institutions, and gave tone to our morals, "in the days of old." On their posterity devolves the less arduous work of transmitting, at least unimpaired, these inestimable blessings. We are called, not to originate, but to preserve—not to overturn, but to maintain; and from the fixed and central point of Equal Rights—the pivot on which all the complicated machinery of our government revolves—carry forward among men the great work of virtue and liberty—faith and love.

Our fathers and our elders, in character and in life, furnished convincing illustrations of the safety, peace and happiness resulting from adherence to the principles which we have been considering; and we turn with a mournful pleasure to the particular instance before us in the person of JEREMIAH KEELER, the patriot soldier, the useful citizen, the sincere Christian; for the following brief notices of whom I am indebted to another hand.

Mr. Keeler was born May 6th, 1760, in the town of Ridgefield, Fairfield County, Connecticut.

In the spring of 1777, a party of the enemy having burnt Danbury, and proceeding through Ridgefield on their work of destruction, were opposed by a small company of militia. Mr. K. was aroused to patriotic ardor by witnessing the short engage-

ment that followed, and at the solicitation of Col. Bradley, eagerly enlisted in the army, being at the time, not 17 years of age. With the Connecticut Line he shared the fatigues and dangers of the three memorable years that immediately followed. Shortly after which, being selected by Baron Steuben, he joined the Light Infantry commanded by General de La Fayette, under whom he held the post of orderly Sergeant. He was frequently appointed to execute difficult and responsible duties; and on an occasion of this kind the Marquis presented him with a sword and his thanks, as a testimonial of his regard for a faithful and courageous soldier. At the memorable siege of Yorktown, when La Fayette's Brigade was employed to storm one of the British forts, Sergeant K. was one of the first who in the midst of a murderous fire, scaled the breastworks, and compelled the enemy to yield. He witnessed the surrender of Cornwallis, which virtually terminated the war; but he remained faithfully at his post, until the disbanding of the forces in 1783, having participated in the reverses and successes of the Continental Army, without interruption since his enlistment. As a vivid illustration of the sufferings which the brave soldiers endured, Mr. K. relates that he was sometimes so tormented by hunger as to be tempted to gnaw the flesh from his own shoulders!

But we turn with pleasure to the character of the departed patriot, as exhibited in a long subsequent life, in the midst of peaceful scenes. For nearly half a century a disciple of Jesus, he bore a faithful testimony to the reality of the Gospel—a "living epistle, known and read of all men."

His reverence for the Sabbath was an example well worthy of imitation at this time. Within his house on that holy day the most perfect order and quietness must be observed. During the hours not devoted to public worship, the Word of God was his constant companion, and well did he become acquainted with its history, its doctrines, and its requirements. As a faithful parent he instilled its precious truths into the minds of his children, and thus furnished them with a fitting preparation for the trials and responsibilities of life. The *fast-day* also, was to him a solemn occasion, which he religiously observed.

As a counsellor, he was a safe guide. Principles of the strictest integrity controlled his conduct and formed the basis of his advice to others.

He was emphatically a peace-maker, studying the harmony of the entire neighborhood, and endeavoring both by precept and example to bring into general operation the law of kindness,—a practical obedience to that new rule, that as Christ hath loved us, so should we also love one another.

He was hospitable; a consistent observer of the Scripture direction, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers." Especially was his abode a refuge for the distressed and needy, who found in him

a sympathising friend, and by whom they were never sent empty away.

But pre-eminently as a Christian did the excellence of his character shine forth with the brightest lustre. He was humble and devout, cheerful in the performance of duty, and punctual in his attendance on the services of the sanctuary. He said *less* in regard to his private feelings than some would have done, but we doubt not experienced much of that peace which passeth understanding. During the latter part of his life, being laid aside from active duties by his infirmities, much of his time was spent in the retirement of his own room in acts of devotion, communing with Him who is no longer seen through a glass darkly, but face to face.

The approach of death brought with it no terrors to him; for he had long regarded the dread messenger as a welcome friend who would remove the shackles of clay, and enable him to wing his way to that house not made with hands whose happy occupants shall never more be distressed by the trials of life or the infirmities of age. His hope, built upon the Rock of Ages, did not fail him; and when informed that he could not long survive, he replied, "I am ready to go whenever the summons comes,"—a blissful confidence, in view of which the most thoughtless might offer the request of one of old, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" His departure we should not regret; for he has gone to his everlasting reward.

In closing this discourse, we cannot refrain from the expression of one interesting thought. This aged veteran was a soldier in another army besides the one we have mentioned. He had felt the chains of the soul's slavery; and he heard a voice from Heaven exclaiming, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed!" He enlisted for life under the great Captain of Salvation. He maintained a successful warfare against the soul's adversary, with weapons which are not carnal but spiritual, and he now wears the victor's crown. I invite you, beloved hearer, to participate in this "glorious liberty of the sons of God!" The civil freedom which you now enjoy—the blood-bought gift of a patriotic ancestry—is as a means to this glorious end. The act of Providence which conferred the one, bids you accept the other. Be no longer an alien from the Commonwealth of Israel, which is now the great Republic of God's people, whose citizenship is in Heaven. The Lord Jesus Christ proclaims liberty to the captives "in Satan's bondage held." Put on therefore the whole armor of God, that you may war a good warfare, and come off conqueror and more than a conqueror, through Him that hath loved us. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life. The conflict may be long and obstinate; but the victory is certain, and the reward is infinite. Our glorious Leader looks back on the long line of struggling combatants, and proclaims, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne!"